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because in practice these two principles are opposed to each other and that prevents you from following your good desires. But if you are subject to the ruling of the Spirit then you will no longer do the deeds of your sinful nature which bring you under the condemnation of the law. Everybody knows what the deeds of the sinful nature are .... I have warned you before, and I now do so again, that people who do such things will not receive the promised gift of the kingdom of God. By contrast, the result of the Spirit's power in our lives is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, sheer goodness, trustworthiness, gentleness and self-control. No law of any kind forbids such acts or condemns the person who practises them. But those who belong to Christ Jesus do not merely display such actions; at the same time they have said No to their sinful nature with its passionate desires. So then, if we have life in the Spirit as our principle, let us see to it that we really do follow the guidance of the Spirit. Don't let us be boastful, provoking one another and being envious of one another.'

IV

Paul's teaching is given in the context of a tendency to substitute a religion of works for a religion of faith. That is why the law crops up suddenly and surprisingly in the middle of our passage (5: 18, 23). This is probably not the immediate problem in our own Christian lives. Nor in precisely this form will it be the problem in modern congregations; they may try to justify themselves by works, but hardly by the works of the law of Moses. Consequently, in expounding this passage today we have to approach it from other angles, relate it to modern problems, and see how a passage directed to one particular set of circumstances can still speak to us in a different situation.

Two problems are promptly suggested by the modern Christian situation. The one is that of the Spirit. Is the Spirit a reality today? Paul's letter certainly indicates that the Spirit was a fact of Christian experience in Galatia. Today there is a tendency for us to seek the reality of the Spirit in the more spectacular gifts which he bestows as he wills. The question of the continuing reality of these gifts and the extent to which they should be deliberately sought can be left aside here. What our passage does teach is that there is a sanctifying work of the Spirit which is of vital importance in the Christian life. It provides teaching about the fruit of the Spirit which is needed to balance a one-sided emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit.

The other problem is that of sin in the Christian life. How do we get victory over the continuing pull of temptation in our lives? Is 'perfection' possible? Does the Spirit really mean power for righteous living?

These two problems are ultimately one. What has our passage to say to modern Christians who are perplexed by it, not only intellectually as they try to wrestle with the problems of divine power and the human will, but also practically as they are confronted by the presence of sin in their lives?

One thing is clear. For Paul, the view that Christianity is simply another set of rules for righteous living is false. Any attempt to demythologize the Spirit into a source of ethical directions and nothing more goes clean against his deepest intentions in this Epistle. For then Christianity would become simply a new legalism, and Paul is absolutely certain that this is not the case. Faith is not a new kind of work. Rather, the Spirit and faith are the two sides of one coin, so that when I believe, the Spirit is active in me to produce new, righteous life.

But does this power really work? How would you answer the person who says that he has tried to surrender himself to the power of the Spirit and yet finds that he succumbs to the desires of his lower nature? Is the Christian life a continuing struggle? Is it possible so to surrender oneself to the Spirit that henceforth the human will is ruled by the will of the Spirit? How can a person find his way, so to speak, out of Romans 7 into Romans 8? Is the answer that as the Word is proclaimed in the power of the Spirit sinful men are enabled to receive it by faith and to experience its reality? There is a problem here that seems to defy intellectual resolution; our task as expositors is to present the promises of God, believing that the Spirit will make them real and effective to our hearers.

Comment: Predestination in biblical thought

Stephen Motyer

Mr Motyer takes up some of the issues raised by Paul Marston's 'Comment' on the theme of predestination in TSFB *68, Spring, 1974, pp. 18–20, and looks afresh at the biblical evidence.*

Paul Marston's solution to the problem of biblical predestination is radical indeed! He cuts the Gordian knot and sweeps one half of the problem out of the Scriptures entirely, locating it instead in a church tradition starting with Augustine,[1] and tracing its pedigree in Augustine's pre-Christian Manichaeism.[2]

[1] See his 'Comment', p. 18.
[2] *Art. cit.*, p. 19.

But surely the problem does present itself acutely within the Scriptures. Leaving aside the issue of the predetermining of history, let us take four statements of Scripture dealing with the smaller issue of predestination to salvation:

(1) 'God . . . desires (*thelei*) all men to be saved' (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4).

(2) 'No purpose of thine can be thwarted' (Jb. 42: 2).[3]

(3) 'If any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire' (Rev. 20: 15).

(4) 'For they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do (*eis ho kai etethēsan*)' (1 Pet. 2: 8).

No good is done by denying that there are theological problems here. According to the first two references, God's unbeatable will is directed towards the salvation of all men; and indeed, all Christians everywhere depend upon the will of God for their salvation — why else do we find the end of Romans 8 so comforting? What are we to do, then, when we discover from the third and fourth references that not only does this will in some cases eventually fail, but also that its failure was in some sense actually decreed? There is a real theological problem here, within the bounds of the Scriptures themselves; and this is only one of many similar 'disharmonies'[4] which could likewise be illustrated.

How are we to deal with it? If we say that, in spite of the fact that *thelō* is used, the will of God in the first reference represents his good pleasure which for a variety of reasons is not realized in all cases, we relieve the tension between the first two and the last two references; but we create a real difficulty between the first and the second. How can God's will both fail in some cases, and also never be thwarted? But the evangelical theologian is committed to maintaining the truth of both references. When, therefore, he follows the obvious course and asserts that God can be spoken of as having two wills—a 'preceptive' will which desires the salvation of all men but is not always fulfilled, and a 'decretive' will which is never turned from its purpose[5] — is he really saying in an elegant way that 'God is telling us he wants one thing when really he wants something else (*i.e.* he is lying)'?[6] Of course not: he is merely seeking to fulfill his duty rightly to divide the word of truth. If he is to be faithful to the biblical evidence he cannot do anything else. And if this were not enough in itself to show that the idea of two wills is not 'forced on to Scripture rather than drawn out of it,'[7] we have the material put together by Donald Allister in *TSFB* 69, p. 15, where he shows that the division is explicitly made in the Scriptures.

Related to this is another strange feature of Paul Marston's article, which lies in his use of the concept of 'fate'. He uses this word in nominal or verbal form seventeen times without ever clearly explaining what he means by it. He seems, however, to mean a destiny which God imposes upon a man without reference to any faculty which the man may have for choosing or rejecting the destiny. This we infer from his denial that Jesus was 'fated' to the cross on the ground that his 'prayer in Gethsemane made it quite clear that his will was distinct from that of the Father, and that he deliberately subjected it to the Father's will although he could have chosen to be rescued'.[8] So when he says that, according to Augustine, 'it was . . . God's sovereign choice of you which determined your fate',[9] we should presumably understand Augustine's view to be that God's choice of individuals bypassed their own wills and personalities, and compelled them to a destiny which he alone had chosen.[10]

It is plain what Mr Marston has done. He has set up free will and compulsion as the only possible alternatives in the process of conversion, made them mutually exclusive and banished the latter from the Scriptures on the ground that assertions of the validity of the human response are found there. But when has the Augustinian tradition ever maintained that God annuls human wills and personalities when he calls them by grace? It has always held that the integrity of the human personality, as a composite of mind, heart and will, is always preserved when God deals with men.

The strangeness of this as an approach to the problem of biblical predestination is indicated by an inconsistency within the 'Comment'. On p. 20 he asserts that the only aspect of God's plan which has been fully determined so as to be immutable is the blessing of mankind through the work of Christ. 'It is inconceivable that any mere human being could thwart this ultimate plan of God', he says. And yet, as we have already seen, he also shows from Matthew how Christ deliberately submitted to his work as a free response to his Father, even though he could have backed out. On his presuppositions, Mr Marston cannot allow these two things to coexist. He refuses to find individual determination to salvation in Scripture on the ground that this nullifies the response of faith or the refusal of

[3] This verse represents the 'lesson' of the whole of the book of Job, and is the clear testimony of Scripture (*e.g.* Is. 40: 15, 22–24; Dn. 4: 34,35; Ps. 2; Rom. 9: 19–21; Eph. 1: 11; Prov. 16: 9). The relationship of these verses to texts such as Luke 7: 30, which at first sight seem to contradict them completely, partakes rather of the nature of the *antinomy* which we have sought to define below, and is a good example of that antinomy.

[4] Mr Marston's own word. Some other examples will be observed later.

[5] These terms are to be preferred to the ones mentioned by Mr Marston on p. 19. 'Signified' and 'effectual' do tend to imply what he charges. It must be emphasized that this division is not intended to represent a division in God's mind; rather, the division is in our apprehension and description of his dealings with men.

[6] p. 19.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] p. 20.

[10] This is in fact a great misrepresentation of Augustine's position. True, he was a Manichee for some ten years before he became a Christian. But he rejected Manichaeism precisely because it emaciated man's will by taking away all responsibility for evil, and thus made him complacent in his sin. See *Confessions*, Book 7. He responded to God with all his being, and his response was the heart of his religion. He could not conceive (as he would have to if Mr Marston's representation of his view is correct) of a man being saved who did not respond in love and trust to God.

unbelief, both of which are clearly taught. On exactly the same ground, therefore, it should not be possible for him to say *both* that God's plan for blessing mankind in Christ was immutable *and* that Christ freely submitted to the cross. In order to be consistent, he must say *either* that God's plan is immutable and that Christ was 'fated' to the cross, with no possibility of joyful acceptance or fearful rejection of his lot; *or* that Christ did freely obey, and that God's plan for ultimate blessing is by no means immutable. But this latter, as he himself recognizes, would flatly contradict the testimony of some of the verses which he lists at the bottom of col. 1 on p. 20, where we have plain statements (*e.g.* Acts 2: 23; 4: 28) that the crucifixion took place according to God's fixed plan and determination. The fact that Christ was not a 'mere human being' has no bearing on this aspect of the crucifixion: we are simply concerned with the coincidence within one event of both a fixed determination of God and a free and willing response.

It is plain that behind this 'illogicality' there lies the testimony of Scripture. Mr Marston is quite right to assert both truths — not right according to his own presuppositions, but right according to the witness of the text. In fact he has here in a nutshell exactly what the Reformed tradition wishes to say concerning the relationship between the divine sovereignty and the validity of the human response in conversion: just as both factors were together operative in the crucifixion of Christ, so both factors are together operative in any individual's salvation. God has freely determined since before the foundation of the world those who are his, in such a way that their salvation is utterly assured;[11] yet when these people believe, their hearts and wills reach out in a real act of love and trust towards the Saviour. As far as we are concerned, these two facts are irreconcilable; but because each stands upon such a firm scriptural footing, both pedigrees are irrefutable, and we must hold each truth equally. Scripture presents us with them side by side; for instance, in John 6 we find it stated that on the one hand, 'No one can come to me unless the Father . . . draws him' (verse 44); and this fact is given as the reason for the unbelief of some of the disciples (verses 64, 65). On the other hand, 'him who comes to me I will not cast out', and, 'he who believes has eternal life' (verses 37, 47). These latter statements are made by way of universal invitation, and are not, apparently, intended to be subconsciously qualified by verse 44. Somehow Jesus sees the two, not as though they have to be held in tension, but as though the one necessitates the other: 'All that the Father gives me *will come* to me', he says (verse 37). The Father's gift of the redeemed to the Son, far from annulling the response of the redeemed, makes it necessary: yet it is a real response. See also Acts 13: 48.

The relationship of these truths to one another has been called that of *antinomy*.[12] Strictly, the dictionary allows no substantial difference between antinomy and contradiction; but we must maintain that we are not dealing with a contradiction here. There is a place where both truths cohere in perfect relation, with no hint of disharmony between them: that place is the mind of God. Scripture, in that it reflects the mind of God, also holds both truths in harmony, and never expresses them in the form, 'Now you may find this hard to believe, but . . . '. Therefore, if the dictionary will allow us to give antinomy the extended meaning of an *apparent* contradiction which is more than a paradox but which is ultimately resolvable, we will adopt that term. It is a term which will be useful outside this particular area of theology: we meet antinomies also in Christology, in the doctrine of the Trinity and in the doctrine of Scripture. So we are not suggesting a novel or one-time relationship between these two truths of God's real sovereignty and man's real response in conversion.

The fact, however, that man's response to God is real, flowing with full force from man's own heart and will, does not necessarily mean that it is *free* in itself to make the response. Paul Marston, however, makes the response of man's will not only a necessary part of conversion, but also the determining factor in conversion. 'Israel was the chosen nation, but the individuals were not thereby assured of final salvation, for this depended on their own individual response to God' (p. 20), and he specifically excludes the old idea of 'irresistible grace'. Similarly he emphasizes the other side of the case, the forfeiting of salvation because of the refusal to believe (p. 20). In both salvation and condemnation, the *decisive* move is made by the will of man.

In conversion this must mean that man possesses some kind of an innate tendency towards God, an ability to believe or at least to cry out against his unbelief. Man possesses a freedom in this regard which would mean that, given the right circumstances and the right education, everyone would become a Christian. But this is precisely the opposite of what in fact we find the Scriptures teaching. If they are clear about anything, it is that the Fall has rendered men incapable of believing in, looking to, trusting or loving God. The message of Old Testament history here is simply that the greater the blessings, the greater the rebellions: so much so that the later prophets focus on the nature of the human heart in sin. To Jeremiah, the heart is

[11] Mr Marston's interpretation of Ephesians 1: 4,5, traditionally quoted in support of this truth, is very weak indeed. On the ground that (among other things) our adoption (*huiothesia*) is a future event, he makes the 'designation' (*proorizō*) mentioned in verse 5 subsequent to conversion but prior to the final salvation. *Huiothesia* certainly does have a future reference in Romans 8: 23, but in Romans 8: 15 and Galatians 4: 5,6 it is plainly a present possession. How can we cry 'Abba! Father!' unless we are *already* sons (Gal. 4: 6)? Mr Marston has in fact failed to consider the frequently-noted tension in Pauline eschatology, whereby *huiothesia* can be both a future and a present possession. Since this is so, it is special pleading to say that *huiothesia* has a solely future reference here. It is much more satisfactory to give meaning to the prefix on *proorisas* from the phrase *pro katabolēs kosmou* ('before the foundation of the world') in Ephesians 1: 4, thus fixing the time of our designation to sonship long prior to conversion!

[12] J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (London, 1961), pp. 18ff.

unfathomably corrupt; and one of the central features of the 'new covenant' from God about which he prophesied was the transformation of the heart (31: 33, 34). Ezekiel pictures the people as a young woman brought out of degradation and squalor by a loving husband; but instead of responding in love and thankfulness she spurns the gifts and uses them for her own sinful ends (chapter 16). He too prophesied about a renewal of heart (36: 26–27), not as a help to greater response but as the prior condition of all response. In their present state the people could be compared to a valley full of dry bones—could he have given a more vivid image of unresponsiveness? They were to be raised to responsiveness by a sovereign life-giving act of God (37: 1–14).

Paul confirms this diagnosis in his examination of man's will in Romans 1: 19ff. Unaided, man's will simply leads him to deny God, to refuse to worship him, to become foolish, to start displaying all kinds of corruption, injustice and cruelty and to approve of those who do such things. Nowhere does he represent this will as initiating the relationship with God, and he explicitly denies this to be the case in Romans 9: 16. His verdict is that of the Psalmist: '"None is righteous, no, not one . . . ." "There is no fear of God before their eyes"' (Rom. 3: 10, 18).

Thus a doctrine of predestination to salvation is necessitated simply by the nature of man in sin: otherwise no man would ever be saved. A prior action of God the Holy Spirit is needed to quicken the heart and the will and to grant repentance and faith, so that man's response may proceed not from a will *free* to respond but from a will *freed* to respond.

Biblical predestination, however, is not just an implication of the nature of man in sin. It proceeds from the whole doctrine of God, and particularly from the doctrine of God's providence. There are certain theological problems here which Paul Marston does not seem to have reckoned with. It is easy to say that 'if things happen which are against God's will and plan, we cannot picture God himself as predetermining that it should happen thus' (p. 20): but it is not so easy to go on to say that one still believes in him as the provident Ruler-God who directs the world which he has created—in whom we must believe if we are to be true theists. Paul Marston creates a great tension here, because he suspends God's providence in relation to the vast majority of events which occur — *i.e.* all sinful events. And whatever sort of providence is ascribed to God, there is the problem of reconciling that to the existence of a real independent action on the part of man, as we have already seen in the case of Christ and the cross.

What *does* Scripture teach about the extent of God's providence? Marston argues by implication from the fact that God's will can be broken: but the Bible contains much direct teaching on the subject which ought to be examined before implications are drawn from other truths. He asserts the predetermined nature of the plan to bless mankind in Christ: has he a clear scriptural warrant for drawing a distinction of kind between the saving events which make this plan a reality, and other, lesser, events which, he says, are not the result of an immutable plan? This would seem to be difficult to maintain. For if the great saving event of the New Testament is predetermined, then so also is that of the Old: the predetermined nature of the exodus is amply demonstrated by passages such as Genesis 15: 13–14;[13] Exodus 2: 24; 3: 8, 17; 6: 4–8. The exodus was a direct act of God's providence to save his people, promised and then carried out by him.

The same can be said of other events, less important but still of great theological significance, like God's central acts of judgment. The judgment on Judah at the hands of Assyria in 701 BC is recorded in prospect in Isaiah 10: 5–19. The prediction here cannot be based simply on foreknowledge. 'Assyria, the rod of my anger, the staff of my fury! Against a godless nation I send him . . .' (verses 5, 6). Sennacherib is brought to Jerusalem, where God uses him to do his work as a woodman uses an axe (verses 12, 15). The fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC is given the same focus by the author of Lamentations: looking back on that dreadful event he cries, 'The Lord has done what he purposed, has carried out his threat, as he ordained long ago, he has demolished without pity; he has made the enemy rejoice over you, and exalted the might of your foes' (2: 17). He reflects that God's purpose must have been behind the destruction of his city, because, 'Who has commanded and it came to pass, unless the Lord has ordained it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil come?' (3: 37, 38).

Other large events (but of smaller significance) are likewise shown to be predetermined: ethnic migrations (Am. 9: 7); the sacking of any city (Am. 3: 6); the conquering of the land of Canaan with the many individual victories over towns and communities which that involved (Ex. 6: 4; Jos. 1: 2–5; 6: 2; 8: 1; 11: 6 *etc.*). And on the smallest scale we find that events of individual significance are determined by God. See Joseph speaking to his brothers about his deportation to Egypt (Gn. 45: 5ff; 50: 20[14]), and the generalized statements in Proverbs 16: 9 and 21: 1. This is firmly supported by the New Testament. Whatever the details of exegesis in Romans 8: 28, the Christian is encouraged by this verse to accept all his circumstances as coming from the ordering hand of God, even if these circumstances are troubles (8: 18). He will discover if it is God's will that he should suffer (1 Pet. 3: 17) when the suffering arrives, even if it is caused by someone who opposes God and is apparently acting under the guidance of the devil (*e.g.* Acts 14: 19–22).[15]

[13] The context of covenant-making here makes it essential that God is speaking of his own action, to keep his side of the covenant. He cannot merely be foreseeing the exodus.

[14] It is important to note that Joseph is saying more here than simply that God brought good out of evil; 'God *meant* it . . . ' (*hāsab*): his purpose was not subsequent to the brothers', but prior to it, so that his purpose could be seen as the underlying reason why Joseph had been sold.

[15] It is worth noting that all this is to be seen in Scripture against the background of a complete determining of the natural world (*e.g.* Pss. 65: 9–13, 104 *passim*; Is. 40: 12, 26; Am. 4: 7–10; Mt. 6: 26–30; 10: 29; Mk. 4: 39–41; Heb. 1: 3).

Scripture even encourages us to believe that evil events are determined by God. 2 Samuel 24: 1 shows us God inciting David to commit a sin for which he later punishes both him and the people. Micaiah sees a lying spirit being sent from the heavenly court to deceive the prophets so that Ahab should be killed (1 Ki. 22: 22). Job chapters 1 and 2 show Satan to be at God's beck and call: he is allowed to afflict Job only at God's instruction. God sends evil spirits to trouble sinners (Jdg. 9: 23; 1 Sa. 16: 14), and hardens their hearts (Ex. 10: 1, *etc.*; Dt. 2: 30; Jos. 11: 20; Is. 6: 10; 63: 17): that is, he brings them to their deserved end by causing them to sin more deeply and persistently. Proverbs 16: 4 gives us the generalized statement, 'The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble', where the qualifying clause is added in case it should be thought to be excepted from the first. Right at the heart of the Bible we have the undeniable fact that the crucifixion of Christ was a sin for which sinners will stand judgment: God had determined that that evil should be done.

These studies are very brief and cover not a fraction of the relevant material; but it does seem that Scripture never allows that God relaxes his providence. On the contrary, Scripture sees God's providence as active in relation to all events. No-one will deny that this is difficult to comprehend, especially as we consider the awful extent of evil in the world. There are, however, certain inferences which we must *not* draw from this teaching. We must not infer that God is morally to blame for evil events which occur. Scripture emphasizes nothing more strongly than the unimpeachable holiness of God. The blame is always attached to the human actors, who are guilty for what they do and who receive their punishment. This is related to the second inference which we must not draw; namely that God's universal, ordering providence removes the possibility of a valid independent response on man's part for which he can be rewarded or punished. The reason no blame attaches to God is simply that the human actors are always pictured as really doing what they do. There is no sense in Scripture that God's action is the *real* cause of an event, while that of the human agent is only an *apparent* cause, with no real validity in itself. In obeying God's command to enter and take possession of the promised land the people were making a free response: therefore, the possession of the land was the reward of their obedience. But their possession of the land was also God's act, as he acted to keep his covenant (Gn. 15:16), and therefore there was no doubt but that they *would* take possession. And Isaiah 10: 5–19 which, as we have seen, emphasizes so clearly the providence of God in bringing Sennacherib to Jerusalem and using him as his instrument there, startles us by contrasting with God's providence the ferocious, godless scheming which consciously motivated the pagan king (verses 6–8, 11): an attitude of heart for which God judges him (verse 12).

We are dealing with another antinomy. In fact, this antinomy, in that it embraces all events and actions, contains within itself the antinomy which we noted earlier with regard to conversion. To call it an antinomy is not just a neat way of making approving noises about a contradiction: in the first place, Scripture really does assert both truths side by side, and therefore we must believe both of them, whatever name we use to style the relationship; and secondly, the antinomy has to do only with the way God has ordered his world: within his own mind and heart the two truths cohere perfectly. The difficulty is only apparent, although we cannot see the resolution of it.

This all illustrates the importance of making the distinction which we tried to establish at the start of this 'Comment' between God's preceptive will (his ideal for the human race) and his decretive will (his purpose for men in their fallen state which cannot be turned aside).[16] It runs through all the scriptural material which we have tried briefly to present. If the distinction is not made, there can be no reason, on the one hand, why God should punish Sennacherib for obeying him by ravaging Judah, or why he should punish those who fulfilled his will by crucifying his Son; nor, on the other hand, why anyone should ever be saved, since Scripture gives us no expectation that anyone will obey the command (precept) to repent and believe (Acts 10: 43; 17: 30) unless they have been ordained to do so (Acts 11: 18; 13:48).

Paul Marston comments as follows:

A central feature of the above is its ready acceptance of supposed basic 'antimonies' in Christian truth. Consider, for example, Mr Motyer's belief that God wills everyone to be saved, yet, although his will is always done, not everyone will be saved. He can find no way even to begin to explain how this is paradoxical rather than contradictory — but asks us to have faith that in the mind of God the contradiction is not really contradictory. I have no space to discuss the verses cited to support these supposed 'antimonies', but would recommend those interested to read the recent book *God's Strategy in Human History* by Roger Forster and myself (STL Press). Some OT verses cited are not analysed in our book — though these are often vague and should surely be interpreted in light of the NT revelation of Christ rather than *vice versa*. But I think all the NT verses cited above (*e.g.* Jn. 6: 44–65; Acts 11: 18; 13: 48; Rom. 1: 19; 3: 10–18; 8: 18, 28; 9: 19–21; Eph. 1: 11; 1 Pet. 2: 8) are analysed in our book, and I believe Mr Motyer interprets them wrongly. The same applies to the book of Job, and also to biblical concepts like adoption (*huiothesia*) which are likewise analysed.

Taking up just one specific point, I do not think that it has been noticed that my use of the word 'fate' arose from Mr Clines' suggestion that biblical predestination

[16] Of course, there are difficulties: notably, why do God's preceptive and decretive wills not coincide in the matter of the extent of salvation? According to the former he desires the salvation of all men; but he does not so decree. Scripture gives us no direct answer to this question; but it points our minds in the right direction by making us wonder, not at the fact that salvation is not universal, but at the fact that there is salvation at all. Given that, we leave the rest to God, as Paul did (Rom. 11: 33ff.).

was somehow akin to Greek, Roman and Islamic ideas of 'fate'. A definition would take too long, but I could suggest readings in Greek, Roman and Islamic literature if required. On the issue of Christ's free will, I still do not believe pagan concepts of fate to be parallel to God's foreordained plan for Christ, who freely chose the cross. No mere human being could thwart God's ultimate plan for the world — Christ, however, was not a mere human being but part of the Godhead. The Godhead's ultimate plan is immutable as far as we are concerned, but this is not to say that God himself (in one of his persons) could not have chosen otherwise. There remain questions such as whether Christ's effective choice was made in pre-existent glory or on earth, and what would have happened if he had rejected the cross. These questions are, in my view, unfathomable, not because contradictions are involved but because we have insufficient information to discuss them.

In summary, one can accept that conversion means abandoning reason and clinging in blind faith to a belief that contradictions are not really contradictory, or else one can seek to interpret, under God, all the statements of Scripture consistently with each other. The latter course is the one attempted in our book — with what degree of success we achieve our aim, the reader must be left to judge.

Approach to theology: Open mind or empty mind?

David Field

Mr Field, a former secretary of TSF, discusses the question: Must a Christian lay aside his Christian convictions when he comes to study academic theology? We are grateful to the author and publisher for permission to reprint this extract from the author's booklet Approach to Theology *(IVP, 10p).*

It used to be thought that in order to write an accurate account, the honest historian must first decontaminate his material by ridding it of all personal colouring and private judgment. The result might be very dull, but it would at least be clinically sterile, and only in this way could the reader be sure that he was getting at the facts and not an individual's interpretation of them.

In rather the same way, it has sometimes been tacitly assumed that if a theological student wants to be really honest and 'scientific', he must first go through the mental exercise of stripping off all the prejudices and bias he has inherited from his past. If he happens to be a convinced Christian from a particular tradition, he must at the very least be willing to approach his academic study with the recognition that other people's positions are as likely to be correct as his own. Although personally convinced of the historicity of the resurrection, for example, in order to maintain his intellectual integrity as a scholar, he must be able to think himself into a position from which he can see that a diametrically opposite view may equally well be right.

In the last few years the pendulum has tended to swing in the other direction, so that Professor Alan Richardson can write: 'It is recognized in a new way that in history and in theology the stand-point of the observer and his personal judgements cannot, and should not, be excluded in the name of "science".' No historian or theologian can approach his work in a mental vacuum; nor can either justly be charged with dishonesty if he fails to measure up to the impersonality of a detached observer. Indeed, whatever his background and convictions, any claim to absolute detachment must in itself be partially dishonest if only because it presupposes an impossible standard.

All this of course raises difficulties for those who come to college with definite convictions. But here a vital distinction has to be made. *An open mind is not the same as an empty mind.* Failure to distinguish clearly between these two alternatives can be utterly disastrous. Time and time again one hears of men who are being reproached for '*closing* their minds to the assured results of modern scholarship' when in reality they are simply refusing to *empty* their minds of basic convictions in order to make a fresh start.

There are times, of course, when such a charge is fully justified. It is quite possible for a theological student with decided convictions to approach his course as a kind of spiritual survival test, to cringe from contact with anything that calls in question part of his faith and to reject all new ideas on principle. If a book without the right *imprimatur* has to be read for exam purposes, every attempt must be made to seal away its contents in a special 'examinations only' compartment of the mind which can later be emptied and thoroughly fumigated. Even the apparently sound insights of an otherwise unsympathetic tutor must suffer the same fate in case subliminal heresy is absorbed unawares. When the last day of the final term arrives, college dust can be shaken off sensitive feet with a sign of relief. The test has been safely passed and the student emerges untainted, eager to get on with the work to which God has called him and sincerely grateful that the college or university has left no distinguishable mark on his mind or soul.